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National Association of Hispanic Journalists
529 14th St., NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20045-2001

Feb. 25, 2003

Via Electronic Filing

Hon. Marlene Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. S.W.
Washington, DC 20054

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Re: MB Docket No. 02-277 (Review of the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules)

MM Docket No. 01-235 (Cross-Ownership of Broadcast Stations and Newspapers)

MM Docket No. 01-317 (Radio Broadcast Stations in Local Markets)

MM Docket No. 00-244 (Definition of Radio Markets)

The National Association of Hispanic Journalists passed a resolution calling on the FCC to postpone adopting new broadcast ownership rules until the commission has held hearings in different parts of the country that allows for the maximum possible input by the public.

Attached is a press release the NAHJ issued and the resolution the board passed on Feb. 22.

Sincerely,

Juan Gonzalez
NAHJ President

Contact: Joseph Torres
(202) 662-7143

Feb. 25, 2003

NAHJ Calls on the FCC to Postpone Issuing New Broadcast Ownership Rules to Allow for Further Deliberations

WASHINGTON -- The National Association of Hispanic Journalists appealed to the FCC this week to postpone issuing new broadcast ownership regulations until the commission has held a series of public hearings nationwide that allow for the maximum possible public input into its deliberations.

During a Feb. 21-22 meeting in New York City, the board of directors of NAHJ also called on media companies to provide adequate news coverage of the commission's broadcast ownership review and for journalists and journalism organizations to join NAHJ in its appeal to the FCC.

FCC Chairman Michael Powell has called the current review "the most comprehensive look at media ownership ever undertaken by the FCC." Yet, Powell has scheduled only one public hearing in Richmond, Va., Feb. 27.

"The American people have not been adequately informed about the profound changes that are about to occur," said NAHJ President Juan Gonzalez. "Chairman Powell should seek the widest possible public debate before promulgating rules that will fundamentally alter the media landscape in our nation."

A recent action alert, by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, revealed that since the FCC announced the review of the nation's broadcast ownership rules last September, ABC, CBS and NBC have failed to cover the issue. FAIR found only one network story on the issue: a short summary on ABC's World News This Morning that aired on Sept. 9 at 4:30 a.m.

Journalism organizations interested in joining NAHJ in its appeal should contact the NAHJ headquarters at 1000 National Press Building in Washington, D.C., or by calling Joseph Torres at 202-662-7143.

Founded in 1984, NAHJ's mission is to increase the number of Latinos working in our nation's newsrooms and to improve news coverage of the nation's Latino community.

Statement of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists On the FCC's Biennial Review of Broadcast Ownership Rules (Adopted Feb. 22, 2003 by NAHJ's Board of Directors)

Whereas the Federal Communications Commission initiated on Sept. 12, 2002, a biennial review of its media ownership rules, one mandated by section 202 (h) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996;

Whereas FCC Chairman Michael Powell has described this review as “the most comprehensive look at media ownership ever undertaken by the FCC;”

Whereas the regulations that emerge from this FCC process are likely to initiate the most dramatic changes in media ownership in this country since the FCC was created;

Whereas those changes could have a profound effect on the quality of the news the American people receive and on how well the broadcast media meet their legal requirements to serve the public interest by maintaining diversity of views, meeting local needs and promoting competition;

Whereas we the journalists who work for broadcast and newspaper companies will be directly affected by these changes in media ownership;

Whereas the American people have received very little information from our own mass media outlets about these sweeping changes that are about to occur;

Whereas FCC Chairman Powell has chosen to hold only one public hearing on Feb. 27, 2003, where ordinary Americans and civic groups can directly testify before the Commission on these important matters;

Whereas the six ownership rules the FCC seeks to change are extremely complex and involve virtually every branch of the modern mass media;

Whereas the news and information needs of the nation's 35 million Hispanic residents are already poorly served under the current media ownership system and insufficient research has been done on the potential impact on Hispanics of any changes;

Be it resolved that the board of directors of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists:

1) Calls upon the FCC to postpone its scheduled issuing of rules this spring until it has convened a series of public hearings in different parts of the country, so as to allow the maximum possible input by the public into the Commission's deliberations.

2) Calls upon media companies in the United States to provide adequate news coverage of this issue so that the American people can better grasp the nature of these impending changes;

3) Calls upon all other journalists and organizations of journalists in the United States to join us in this appeal.